Offshore Sand & Gravel Facts

Minerals Management Service – Offshore Minerals Management Program

- The Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) generally extends from 3 miles to 200 miles offshore and covers an area of about 1.76 billion acres.

- MMS's Sand & Gravel Program provides policy direction and guidance for the development of sand and gravel resources on the OCS.

- The Sand & Gravel Program collects and analyzes geologic and environmental information, developed through partnerships with fourteen coastal States, to identify and make available sand deposits on the OCS suitable for beach nourishment and wetlands protection projects.

Cooperative Efforts with States

- As the demand for sand for shoreline protection increases, OCS sand and gravel has become an increasingly important resource. Between 1995 and 2003, the MMS provided over 20 million cubic yards of OCS sand for 14 coastal projects.

- Since 1992, the MMS has spent over $8 million for marine mineral environmental studies and is at the cutting edge of adopting new technologies to understand offshore sand and gravel resources.

- To meet the mandates of the Magnuson-Steven Fishery Conservation Act, MMS is currently undertaking an unprecedented study to examine the importance of offshore shoals to fish populations.

- Because the OCS also represents a future source of sand and gravel for construction aggregate, MMS is funding work in the United Kingdom to examine the potential impacts associated with aggregate dredging.

- MMS is a leader providing state-of the art information in assessing the impacts to the shoreline if sand is removed from the OCS. MMS had funded numerous numerical wave modeling studies that evaluate and refining the latest wave models.

- In 2003, the Journal of Coastal Research will publish a special issue contain twelve papers reporting the results of MMS funded study efforts.

Committed to making Federal Sand available for Public Works projects for Beach Restoration at while continuing to ensure protection of the environment.